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SUBJECT: EDUCATION MINISTER IS GUINEA,S NEW OFFICIAL  
GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON

¶1. (U) Over national radio on February 7, Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate announced that the Minister of Education, Ousmane Souare, is the Guinean Government,s new official spokesperson. The former Minister of Communication, Justin Morel Jr., served in that capacity until he was dismissed by President Lansana Conte in early January. In the interim, the Minister of Economic Control has been filling in as the spokesperson.

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COMMENT  
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¶2. (SBU) It is not necessarily unusual that the official Government spokesperson be someone other than the Minister of Communication - only one of the last five spokespersons was actually the Communications Minister. However, the spokesperson has traditionally been someone hand picked to deliver the president's message. The PM,s decision to appoint the Minister of Education as the official spokesperson, after Conte appointed a new Minister of Communications, suggests that the PM is looking for an alternative means for getting his message out. The Minister of Education happens to be one of two union members in the current cabinet (the other is the Minister of Labor). He is also Peuhl and Kouyate has been criticized for favoring his own ethnic Malinke group over other Guinean ethnic backgrounds. When the PAO met with the new Communications Minister, Issa Conde, last week (septel), Conde seemed to want to downplay any significance in Kouyate,s decision. At the same time, Conde appeared evasive and uncomfortable with the question, suggesting that the appointment may be more important than he wanted to let on. END COMMENT.  
CARTER